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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3901st meeting of the Security Council, held on 2 July 1998, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Croatia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 11 June 1998 (S/1998/500) pursuant to its resolution 1145 (1997) of 19 December 1997.

"The Security Council notes that the overall security situation in the Danube region is relatively stable. It also notes that the generally satisfactory performance of the Croatian police in the region is largely due to comprehensive monitoring by the United Nations Police Support Group and the special attention paid to the situation by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia. However, the Council is concerned that, despite the large presence of the Croatian police, ethnically-related incidents, evictions and housing intimidation cases have not been stopped, and that such incidents have increased in the recent period.

"The Security Council expresses its grave concern that a large number of Serb residents and displaced persons have emigrated from the Republic of Croatia since late 1996, mainly because of continued security incidents, ethnically-related intimidation, a dire economic situation, bureaucratic hurdles, discriminatory legislation and a stalled return programme. A continuation of this trend could have a seriously negative effect on the restoration of a multi-ethnic society in the Republic of Croatia. The Council, therefore, welcomes the adoption by the Government of Croatia, on 20 June 1998, of a nationwide programme for the return and accommodation of displaced persons, refugees and resettled persons (S/1998/589) and calls for its prompt and full implementation at all levels, including the abolition of discriminatory property laws and the establishment of effective mechanisms allowing owners to recover their property. It stresses the importance of the prompt and full implementation of the Programme on Reconciliation at all levels throughout Croatia and of preventing and responding to incidents of harassment and unlawful evictions.

"The Security Council reiterates the continuing obligations of the Government of Croatia under the Basic Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (S/1995/951, annex) as well as under international conventions and other agreements. It notes with satisfaction that the Government of Croatia has met the majority of its obligations concerning the provision of public services and employment within the public sector, set out in the Basic Agreement. The Council, however, reiterates that a number of obligations have yet to be fulfilled in such areas as the implementation of the Convalidation Law and the Amnesty Law, the functioning of local municipalities and the permanent funding of the Joint Council of Municipalities. In this regard, the Council stresses the significance of the Article 11 Commission, formed under the provisions of article 11 of the Basic Agreement, as a key instrument in encouraging the Government of Croatia to meet its obligations fully and in underscoring continued international commitment to the successful completion of peaceful reintegration.

"The Security Council calls upon the Government of Croatia to improve police response to ethnically-related incidents, evictions and housing intimidation cases and to take other measures to strengthen public confidence in the police, including through public information and police preventive action. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of the implementation of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of the Interior on 9 January 1998 and the institution of a community policing programme by the Ministry.

"The Security Council fully supports the activities of the United Nations Police Support Group and the United Nations Liaison Office in Zagreb. It welcomes the decision of the OSCE Permanent Council of 25 June 1998 to deploy civilian police monitors to assume, from 15 October 1998, the responsibilities of the United Nations Police Support Group. It also welcomes the invitation by the Representative of the Secretary-General to the Head of the OSCE Mission in Croatia to begin planning for the intended transfer of the police monitoring function in the region to the OSCE. It supports the establishment of a timetable for the handover of the functions of the Support Group to the OSCE and agrees with the intention of the Secretary-General to reduce gradually the number of civilian police monitors, under the conditions specified in his report. The Council looks forward to a report by the Secretary-General by mid-September detailing the arrangements for the termination of the Support Group mandate by 15 October 1998."